CERTAIN

Propoſitions,

By which the

DOCTRIN

OF THE

H. Trinity

Is ſo Explain'd, according to the Ancient Fathers, as to ſpeak it not Contradictory to Natural Reaſon.

TOGETHER

With a Defence of Them, in Anſwer to the Objections of a *Socinian* Writer, in His Newly Printed *Conſiderations on the Explications of the* Doctrin *of the* Trinity: Occaſioned by theſe Propoſitions, among other Diſcourſes.

[Edward Fowler]

In a Letter to that Author.

LONDON,
Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer* at the Three Pidgeons in *Cornhil*, 1694.

CERTAIN

Propoſitions, &c.

1. THE Name of *God* is uſed in more Senſes than one in Holy Scripture.

2. The moſt Abſolutely Perfect Being, is God in the Higheſt Senſe.

3. *Self-Exiſtence* is a Perfection, and ſeems to be the Higheſt of all Perfections.

4. God the Father alone, is in reference to His *Manner of Exiſtence* an Abſolutely Perfect Being; becauſe He alone is Self-Exiſtent.

5. He alone, conſequently, is Abſolutely Perfect, in reference to thoſe Perfections, which do præſuppoſe Self-Exiſtence.

6. Thoſe Perfections are *Abſolute Independence*, and *Being the Firſt Original of all other Beings:* In which the *Son* and the *Holy Ghoſt* are comprehended.

7. All *Trinitarians* do Acknowledge, That theſe Two Perſons are from God the Father. This is affirmed in that Creed which is called the *Nicene*, and in that which falſely bears the Name of *Athanaſius:* Tho' with this difference, that the *Holy Ghoſt* is aſſerted in them, to be from the *Son* as well as from

the *Father*. Wherein the *Greek* Church differs from the *Latin*.

8. It is therefore a flat Contradiction, to ſay that the Second and Third Perſons are Self-Exiſtent.

9. And therefore it is alike Contradictious, to Affirm them to be Beings Abſolutely Perfect in reference to their *Manner of Exiſtence*; and to ſay that they have the Perfections of *Abſolute Independence*, and of being the *Firſt Originals of all things*.

10. Since the *Father* alone is a Being of the moſt Abſolute Perfection, He having thoſe Perfections which the other Two Perſons are uncapable of having, He alone is *God* in the Abſolutely Higheſt Sence.

11. And therefore our Bleſſed Saviour calls *Him*, *The onely True God*, Joh. 17. 3. *This is Life Eternal to know Thee the onely True God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom Thou haſt ſent*. And it is moſt Abſurd to think, That in theſe Words, and the following Prayer, He did addreſs Himſelf to the Three Perſons of the Trinity conjunctly, ſince throughout the Prayer He calls this *Onely Truly God* his Father; and calls Himſelf twice His *Son*, before theſe Words. Not to mention the Abſurdity of making our Lord to pray to Himſelf, or of diſtinguiſhing Himſelf from thoſe Three, of which Himſelf was one. If ſuch a Liberty as this, in interpreting Scripture, be allowable, what Work may be made with Scripture!

12. Our Lord calls the Father, *The Onely True God*, becauſe He only is *Originally*, and of *Himſelf* God, and the Firſt Original of all Beings whatſoever. As he calls him the *Onely Good*, ſaying, *There is none Good*

but

but God, becauſe He alone is *Originally* ſo, and the Spring of all that Good which is in other Beings.

13. The God-head, or God in this Higheſt Sence, can be but *One Numerically*. Of which the beſt Philoſophers were ſatisfied by their Reaſon; and therefore the *Oneneſs* ſo frequently affirmed of Him in *Scripture* is a *Numerical* Oneneſs.

14. There ſeems to be neither Contradiction, nor Abſurdity, in ſuppoſing the Firſt Original of all things, to be productive of other Beings ſo Perfect, as to have all Perfections, but that of *Self-Exiſtence*, and thoſe which are neceſſarily therein implyed.

15. Suppoſing any ſuch Beings to have immediately iſſued forth from that infinite Fullneſs, and Fœcundity of Being, which is in the Deity, each of them muſt have a Right to the Name of *God*, in a Sence *next* to that in which it is appropriated to the *Father*; ſince they have all the Perfections of the *God-head*, but thoſe that muſt of Neceſſity be peculiar to *Him*.

16. It is evident from the *Holy Scripture*, That the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* are *ſuch* Beings, *viz.* That they have all Divine Perfections but the foremention'd: Such as *Unlimited Power*, *Wiſdom*, *Goodneſs*, &c.

17. And they are always ſpoken of in Scripture, as *Diſtinct Beings* or *Perſons*, according to the Proper Signification of this Word, both from the *Father* and from *Each Other*. Nor are ſo many Men or Angels more expreſly diſtinguiſhed as different Perſons or Subſtances, by our Saviour or his Apoſtles, than the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt ſtill are.

18. It

18. It is a very presumptuous Conceit, That there can be no way but that of *Creation*, whereby any thing can be immediately and onely from God, which hath a distinct Existence of its own. Or, That no Beings can have Existence from Him, by way of *Necessary Emanation*: Of which we have a *Clearer Idea* than of Voluntary *Creation*. It is the Word of the Ancients, both Fathers and Philosophers; nor can a better be found to express what is intended by it, *viz.* A more excellent way of existing, than that of *Creation*.

19. It is no less presumptuous to Affirm, That it is a Contradiction to suppose, That a Being can be from *Eternity* from God the Father, if 'tis possible it may be from Him, in a more Excellent Way than that of Creation. And we have an Illustration of both these Propositions, by something in Nature. For, according to our Vulgar Philosophy, *Light* doth exist by necessary Emanation from the *Sun*, and therefore the Sun was not before the Light which proceeds from thence, in Order of *Time*, tho' it be in Order of *Nature* before it. And the Distinction between these Two Priorities, is much Elder than *Thomas Aquinas*, or *Peter Lombard*, or any *School-man* of them all, or *Christian-man* either.

20. And if any thing can be from another thing by way of Necessary Emanation, it is so far from a Contradiction to suppose, that it must only be in order of nature before it; that 'tis most apparently a Contradiction to suppose the contrary.

21. Our 18th. and 19th. Propositions do speak our Explication of the H. Trinity, to be as contrary

trary to *Arianiſm* as to *Socinianiſm*; ſince the *Arians* aſſert that there was at leaſt a moment of time, when the Son was not; and that He is a Creature.

22. Altho' we cannot underſtand, how it ſhould be no Contradiction to affirm, That the Three Perſons are But *One Numerical* Being, or Subſtance; yet hath it not the leaſt ſhadow of a Contradiction to ſuppoſe, That there is an unconceivably cloſe and inſeparable *Union* both in Will and Nature between them. And ſuch a Union may be much more eaſily conceived between *them*, than can that Union which is between our *Souls and Bodies*; ſince *theſe* are Subſtances which are of the moſt unlike and even Contrary Natures.

23. Since we cannot conceive the Firſt Original of All things, to be more than *One Numerically*; and that we acknowledg the now mentioned Union between the three Perſons, according to the Scriptures, together with the intire dependence of the two latter upon the Firſt Perſon, The Unity of the Deity is, to all intents and purpoſes, as fully aſſerted by us, as it is neceſſary or reaſonable it ſhould be.

24. And no part of this Explication, do we think Repugnant to any Text of Scripture; but it ſeems much the Eaſieſt way of Reconciling thoſe Texts, which according to the other Hypotheſes are not Reconcilable, but by offering manifeſt violence to them.

25. The *Socinians* muſt needs Confeſs, that the Honour of the Father, for which they expreſs a very Zealous Concern, is as much as they can deſire taken care of by this Explication. Nor can the Honour

of

of the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* be more Conſulted, than by aſcribing to them all Perfections, but what they cannot have, without the moſt apparent Contradiction, aſcribed to them.

26. And we would think it impoſſible, that any Chriſtian ſhould not be eaſily perſwaded, to think as honourably of his Redeemer and Sanctifier as he can, while he Robs not God the Father for their Sake; and offers no violence to the Sence and Meaning of Divine Revelations, nor to the Reaſon of his Mind.

27. There are many things in the notion of *One God*, which all Hearty Theiſts will acknowledg neceſſary to be conceived of Him, that are as much above the Reach and Comprehenſion of Humane Underſtandings, as is any Part of this Explication of the *H. Trinity*. Nay this may be affirmed, even of the Notion of *Self-Exiſtence*; but yet there cannot be an *Atheiſt* ſo ſilly as to Queſtion it: Since it is not more Evident, that *One and Two* do make *Three*, than that there could never have been *any thing*, if there were not Something which was always, and never began to be.

28. Leſt Novelty ſhould be Objected againſt this Explication, and therefore ſuch ſhould be prejudiced againſt it, as have a Veneration for Antiquity, we add, that it well agrees with the Account which ſeveral of the *Nicene* Fathers, even *Athanaſius* himſelf, and others of the Ancients who treat of this Subject, do in divers places of their Works give of the Trinity: As is largely ſhewed by two very Learned Divines of our Church. And had it not been for the *School-*

Dr. *Cudworth*, and Dr. *Bull*.

men

men, to whom Chriſtianity is little beholden, as much as ſome Admire them, we have reaſon to believe that the World would not have been troubled ſince the Fall of *Arianiſm*, with ſuch Controverſies about this Great Point, as it hath been, and Continues to be.

This Explication of the *B. Trinity* perfectly agrees with the *Nicene Creed*, as it ſtands in our Liturgy, without offering the leaſt Violence to any one Word in it. Which makes our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to be from God the Father by way of *Emanation*; affirming Him to be *God of God*, *very God of very God*, and Metaphorically expreſſing it by *Light of Light*; anſwerably to what the Author to the *Hebrews* ſaith of Him, *Chap.* 1. 3. *viz.* That he is Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, *The Effulgency of his Glory*, and χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, *The Character of his Subſtance:* And ſo is as much *Of one Subſtance with the Father*, as the *Beams* of the *Sun* are with the *Body* of it.

And ſince there have been of late, ſo many Explications or Accounts Publiſhed of this moſt Adorable Myſtery, which have had little better Succeſs than making Sport for the *Socinians*, I thought it very Seaſonable now to Revive *That*, which I affirm with great Aſſurance to be the moſt Ancient one of all; much Elder than the Council of *Nice*; and to have much the feweſt difficulties in it, and to be incomparably moſt agreeable to *H. Scripture*.

A

DEFENCE

Of the Foregoing

Propoſitions.

SIR,

THe Author of the *Twenty Eight Propoſitions* thanks you for the very Charitable Opinion you have expreſſed concerning him, in the Entrance into your Reflexions upon them; and hopes he ſhall always endeavour to deſerve the Character of a Man ſo *Honeſt*, as *never to ſpeak otherwiſe than he thinks*; and *ſo true to his Underſtanding*, as *always to make Reaſon one of his Guides in the Choyce of his Opinions*: He profeſſing to believe, that the Uſe of Reaſon is ſo far from being to be Condemned in Matters of Religion, as no where elſe to be *ſo well* employed: And that it is infinitely unworthy of Almighty God, to conceive it poſſible for Him to Contradict his Internal by his External Revelations. But ſo he muſt have done, ſhould ſuch Writings be of His inſpiring, as are manifeſtly contradictory to the plain Dictates of Natural Reaſon,

which the Wiſe Man ſaith, *Is the Candle of the Lord.*

And Sir, our Author takes no leſs Notice of your Candour, in the Character you give, in the Words following, of his *Explication of the Doctrin of the H. Trinity* in thoſe Propoſitions.

But after your Acknowledgment, That *he hath avoided a great many Contradictions, which* thoſe of your Party *do charge on this Doctrin, as it is held by others*; and that his Explication is a *Poſſible Scheme*; and that *it is clear from any Contradictions to Natural Reaſon*; you Object that, *beſides ſome inſuperable Difficulties, the Author hath not been able to avoid ſome Numerical Contradictions.* Now, as to the *inſuperable Difficulties* with which you charge his Explication, ſince you acquit them from being Contradictions to *Natural Reaſon*, you mean, I ſuppoſe, that it is fraught with ſeveral Contradictions to *H. Scripture:* And I confeſs ſuch Contradictions to be as inſuperable Difficulties to us, as we are *Chriſtians*, as thoſe to *Reaſon* are, as we are *Men.* If this be your Meaning, the Author may well expect to have it ſhewn, what Texts of Scripture are contradicted by this Explication; but if you mean otherwiſe, my Reply is, That you are not ſo ſhallow a Thinker as not to be aware, that there are alſo inſuperable Difficulties in the Notion of *One* God, both as His Nature is deſcribed by all Chriſtians, according to the Account given of Him in H. Scripture; and as all Theiſts are compelled by Natural Light to conceive of Him. Nay you will frankly own, that there is not any one thing in the whole Univerſe, which doth not ſuggeſt inſuperable Difficulties to an Inquiſitive Mind.

And

And whereas, Sir, you Charge our Author with not being able to avoid ſome *Numerical Contradictions*, I confeſs I never before met with this diſtinction, but I think I underſtand it by your Deſcription of it. You ſay that a *Numerical Contradiction is an Error committed in the ſumming up of things.* But how is he guilty of *ſuch Contradictions?* If you mean that he hath made Contradictory Concluſions (or ſuch a Concluſion) to ſeveral of his Premiſſes, I cannot (though *you* do) excuſe him from contradicting *Natural Reaſon*, any more than from contradicting *Himſelf:* And it appears from what follows, that *that* is your Meaning; for, after you had given the Sum and Subſtance of the Firſt Thirteen Propoſitions, your Reflexion thereon is this: *One would think that ſuch a Foundation being laid, the Concluſion muſt be wholly in favour of the* Unitarians. *For if the Father is Abſolutely Perfect; if the Son and Spirit are not Abſolutely Perfect, how ſhall we ever prevent this Conſequence, therefore onely the Father is God? What is the Definition of God among all Divines and Philoſophers? Is it not this, A Being Abſolutely Perfect; or, a Being that hath all Perfections? But if ſo, than onely the* Father *having all Perfections, or being Abſolutely Perfect, He muſt be the onely God, to the certain Excluſion of the other Two Perſons; to the Excluſion of the* Son *and* Spirit *by* Name, *becauſe 'tis affirmed here of them by* Name, *that neither of them is abſolutely Perfect, or hath all Perfections. But this Author will ſhew us in his following Propoſitions, that, for all this, the Son is God, and ſo alſo is the* Holy Ghoſt: *That is, he will put out the Light of the Sun.*

And,

And, Sir, as you have now Repreſented our Author, you cannot but be ſenſible, upon ſecond thoughts, of over great Modeſty in your not having Charged him with *Natural* Contradictions; nay and of too great *Partiality* towards him in *Acquitting him*, as you have done, of ſuch Contradictions. *He will inſtruct us*, ſay you next, *in his Premiſſes, that there is but* One *Who is God, and in the Progreſs and Concluſion, or, in the ſumming up the whole Reckoning, he will make it appear, that there are* Three *Beings, each of which is (ſingly and by Himſelf) God: Which is the Numerical Contradiction that I Charged at firſt on his Hypotheſis.* And I ſay, Sir, if you have not too incautiouſly repreſented him in theſe Words, he is as juſtly to be here Charged with a *Natural*, as with a *Numerical* Contradiction; except you will Affirm, that 'tis no Natural Contradiction to ſay, That *the Number One is as many as Three*, or *the Number Three is no more than One.* But, Sir, I muſt crave leave to ſay, that you have committed a great Overſight in Repreſenting our Author as you have now done. For his Firſt Propoſition is, *The Name of God is uſed in more Senſes than one in H. Scripture.* The *Second, The moſt Abſolutely Perfect Being is God in the Higheſt Sence.* The *Third, Self-Exiſtence is a Perfection*, &c. The *Fourth, God the Father alone is, in reference to His manner of Exiſtence, an Abſolutely Perfect Being, becauſe He alone is Self-Exiſtent.* And from *Theſe*, with the *Five* following Propoſitions, he infers in the *Tenth*, That *the Father alone is God in the Abſolutely Higheſt Sence:* And in the *Thirteenth, That the God-head, or God in this Higheſt Sence, can be but one Numerically.* And therefore,

fore, Sir, you ſhould not have made our Author ſay, (as you do) that there is *but One who is God*, without any Reſtriction, when you now ſee he ſaith, that there is but One who is God *in the Abſolutely Higheſt Sence:* And that God in the *Abſolutely Higheſt Sence*, can be but One *Numerically*. And whereas you ſay, That *he will make it appear that there are Three Beings, each of which is ſingly and by Himſelf God*, you ſhould have ſaid, *He will make it appear that there are Three Beings, each of which is God, but not in all the Self-ſame Reſpects.* And therefore I cannot *as yet* accuſe him, either of any One *Natural* or *Numerical* Contradiction; if this be a Proper Diſtinction, which I will not diſpute.

What remaineth of your Reflexions is chiefly a Charge of *Tritheiſm* againſt this Explication of the Trinity.

1. You ſay, *I acknowledge in theſe Propoſitions the Genuine Doctrin, and very Language of the Fathers, who wrote ſhortly after the Council of* Nice, *till the Times of the* School-men. And the Author is aſſured, that this Explication for Subſtance, is a great deal Elder than that Council. But he gives you his hearty Thanks for this free Conceſſion of yours, becauſe you have ſaved him the Pains of proving his *Laſt* Propoſition: And I will therefore requite you, for him, in imitating *your* Brevity, as you ſay, you do *his*. But methinks you ſhould alſo acknowledge, that the Authors Explication hath no inconſiderable Advantage on its ſide, in that you allow it to be of ſo great Antiquity. If the *Socinians* will not acknowledge *this* an Advantagious Circumſtance, in all diſputable

putable Points, they are certainly the onely Learned Men who have no Regard for *Antiquity*.

2. You add, *But the School-Divines, or the Divines of the Middle Ages, ſaw, and almoſt all the Moderns, that are well verſed in theſe Queſtions, confeſs it, that this Explication is an inexcuſable indefenſible* Tritheiſm. And quickly after you ſay, *That the School-Divines, and, generally ſpeaking, the moſt Learned of the Moderns, with the greateſt Reaſon in the World, abhor making the Three Divine Perſons, to be Perſons in the Proper Sence of that Word: Which is to ſay, they are diſtinct intellectual Beings, and have different Subſtances in Number, tho' not in ſpecies or kind.* And you affirm, that *the forementioned Divines* do with the greateſt Reaſon in the World abhor this, *Becauſe they perceive it deſtroys the True and Real Unity of God; it taketh away his Proper, and Natural, and Numerical Unity; and leaveth onely a Certain Political and Oeconomical Unity; which is indeed onely an imaginary Unity.* Hereto I Anſwer,

1. That a Wiſe Man will think never the worſe of any thing, merely for its having an Ugly *Name* given it: As you would account it no real Diſhonour to the *Socinian Hypotheſis*, ſhould it be called *Ditheiſm*, which ſounds every whit as ill as *Tritheiſm*. And you cannot deny it to be *Ditheiſm* in a certain ſence, becauſe it aſſerts *Two* Gods; one by Nature, and the other by Office; and that this God by Office, is to be *Honoured by all Men, even as they Honour the Father*, (according to his own Declaration) though but a Mere *Man* by Nature. And *this* grates every whit as much upon *my* Underſtanding, as any thing

thing in *this Explication* can on *yours*: And is as contradictory to Natural Reaſon in the Opinion of all *Trinitarians*, as any of their Explications are in the Opinion of *Socinians*; who cannot but acknowledge, that *Honouring the Son even as the Father is Honoured*, is giving him that Honour which is truly and properly *Divine*, let them reſtrain it as much as they can.

2. Whereas you ſay, that this Explication *deſtroyeth the True and Real Unity of God, and therefore to be abhorred*; I muſt grant, if it does ſo, it can not be too much abhorred; but I would know from whence we are to learn, wherein conſiſts His True and Real Unity. It muſt either be learned from Scripture or Reaſon, or both. But as to the *H. Scripture*, this indeed abundantly declareth the Unity of God, but it no where *diſtinguiſheth* of Unity, nor ſaith of what *Nature* that Unity is which it aſcribes to God. Were you never ſo well ſatisfied that *that* Text in St. *John*'s Epiſtles is genuine — *Theſe Three are One*; you would ſay it proves nothing againſt the *Socinians*, becauſe it ſaith not *in what Sence* the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are *One*. But I am ſure our Author never ſpake a truer Word, than what he ſaith in his *Seventeenth Propoſition*, concerning the real *Diſtinction* of the Three Perſons in Scripture. And ſurely thoſe whoſe Notions are moſt agreeable to the Letter, and moſt proper Sence of Scripture, when there is no apparent neceſſity of departing from them (as I think there is the greateſt Neceſſity of keeping thereto in *this* caſe) if they happen to be in an Error, their Error is on the ſafer ſide.

And ſince thoſe of your Opinion do ſo zealouſly contend for making the H. Scriptures the ſole Rule of Faith, and proteſs that you will take nothing for a Point of Religion but what is found in the Bible, (wherein you do like *Proteſtants*, at leaſt if you will acknowledge *that* to be there which is there by evident Conſequence, as well as in expreſs Words); ſince, I ſay, you do ſo, you of all Men ſhould not be over dogmatical in determining a Point, which the H. Scripture is ſilent in. And then for *Reaſon*, ſuch an Unity as our Author (after the Fathers) aſſerts, is not contradictory, or contrary, to any plain and evident Dictate thereof. This I adventure to Affirm with very great Aſſurance: And, Sir, your ſelf muſt needs be of the ſame Mind, if you were in good earneſt (as I can't think otherwiſe) in calling the Explication a *poſſible Scheme*, and owning that it is not contradictory in any of its parts to Natural Reaſon. But, Sir, (to ſpeak my Mind freely) I will not, of all Men, go to School to the *School Divines* to learn what Reaſon ſaith on an Argument of this Nature; and therefore neither to thoſe *Modern Divines*, who pin their Faith upon their ſleeves. If I could ſatisfie my ſelf to be an Implicit Believer, I would a thouſand times rather take the Ancient *Fathers* (and, it may be, *Philoſophers* too) for the Guides of my Reaſon, than thoſe Gentlemen who ſpent their time in the Weaving of Fine Cobwebs; and particularly are ſo ſuperfine upon the ſimplicity of the Divine Eſſence, as to render GOD Almighty (at leaſt, to ſuch a dull Underſtanding as mine) a no leſs *unconceivable* than incomprehenſible Being; and to *ſimpli-*

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ſie Him rather into *Nothing*, than into *Simple Unity*.

3. That this Explication leaveth onely a certain *Political*, or *Oeconomical* Unity is only *ſaid* by you; but the *Twenty Second* Propoſition tells you the contrary, of which more anon.

4. This Explication doth not take away the *Numerical* Unity of the *God-head*, or of God in the Abſolutely higheſt Sence, and the Firſt Original of All things: For it expreſly affirms the Neceſſity thereof, *Prop.* 13th. *being One in Num*

5. It maketh the other Two Perſons as much one with the Firſt, and with one another, as they are, without the moſt apparent Contradiction, capable of being. One in ſo High a Sence, as that we want a Word, by which to expreſs their Unity: And therefore that they are much more than *Specifically* One, as Three *Humane* or *Angelical* Perſons are. Were I a *Schoolman* it ſhould ſcape me hard, but I would add another diſtinction of Unity, between *Specifical* and Numerical, to expreſs *this* Unity by; which I am ſure would have more of a *Fundamentum in re*, than many of *their* Diſtinctions have. This Explication ſpeaks as great a Unity between them, as is between the *Sun* and its *Splendor*, and the *Light* of both: And a greater than is between the *Vine* and its *Branches*; or than is between the *Fountain* and the *Streams* which flow from it: Which are Similitudes of the Ancients. I ſay, this Explication ſpeaks the Unity of the Divine Perſons greater than the Unity of each of theſe; becauſe, tho' they are moſt cloſely and intimately United, yet are not inſeparable. And for the ſame reaſon, it ſpeaks a greater Unity between them, than *One in Kind* *foundation in y^e*

is between our Souls and Bodies; as appears by the *Twenty Second* Propoſition. And *where* is he who will pretend to know how many Degrees, or Kinds of Unity are poſſible, or *actually* are?

6. The inſeparable Unity in *will* and *Nature* between the Three Perſons, which that Propoſition affirmeth not to have the leaſt ſhadow of a Contradiction in it, and therefore is taken into this Explication, doth anſwer all the ends for which the Unity of the Deity was ever aſſerted. And therefore the Diſtinction aſſerted between the Three Perſons, hath not the leaſt Appearance of any one of the pernicious Conſequents, which follow upon a *Plurality of Gods*; and conſequently there is *no reaſon in the World*, (tho' you ſay there is the *greateſt*) why it ſhould be abhorred by the *School-Divines*, or *the moſt Learned among the Moderns*; or by any Mortal, learned or unlearned. For they are outwardly, and in reference to the Creation, perfectly One and the Same God, as concurring in all the ſame External Actions; tho' in relation to *One Another*, there is a real Diſtinction between them. And it ſeems very wonderful, that this ſhould be denyed by any one who profeſſeth himſelf a *Trinitarian*; ſince there is no underſtanding what a Contradiction means, if a Being that *Begets*, and that which is *begotten* thereby, and a Third which *proceeds* from both, ſhould not be really diſtinct from each other.

7. A Plurality of Gods hath generally been ſo underſtood, as to imply more than One independent, and (therefore likewiſe) Self-exiſtent Deity, as the common Arguments againſt a Plurality of Gods do ſuppoſe;

ſuppoſe; but it was never otherwiſe underſtood, than ſo as to import *ſeparate* Deities. And never were there more zealous Aſſerters of the Unity of the Deity againſt the Pagans, than were divers of the Ancients to whom our Author is beholden for the Subſtance of this Explication. One of theſe was *Lactantius* (to paſs by ſeveral others of the Three Firſt Centuries) and I find him *thus* diſcourſing in the 29*th.Chap.* of his Fourth Book, *De Vera Sapientia. Fortaſſe quærat aliquis*, &c. *Some one perhaps will ask, how when we ſay we worſhip One God, we can aſſert Two*, viz. *God the Father, and God the Son*, &c. And to this Queſtion the Father *thus* Anſwers, *Quum dicimus Deum Patrem*, &c. *When we ſay God the Father and God the Son, we don't ſeparate and part them aſunder*, &c. *they have one Mind, one Spirit, one Subſtance.* And, in the next Words, he ſaith in *what ſence* they are One: *Sed ille quaſi exuberans Fons*, &c. *But the Father, is as it were the overflowing Fountain, the Son as a ſtream flowing from him: He like to the Sun, This like to a Sun-beam.* And this is the ſame Deſcription of their Unity with one another, that the *Explication* gives. And I think there needs no more to be ſaid in Defence thereof, againſt the odious Charge of *Tritheiſm* to any ingenuous and Free-minded Perſon.

Nor doth there need to be given any farther Anſwer to what remains in your Paper, that deſigns to prove this a *to be abhorred Tritheiſtical Explication.* But I muſt Clear it from *another* great Miſtake in the Account you next give of it. You ſay that *the Hypotheſis expreſly acknowledgeth in each of the Two Perſons*, not onely *whatſoever Properties can make them to be*

diſtinct

diſtinct intellectual Beings, and Subſtances; but alſo *all the Attributes that are neceſſary to Eſſentiate a God, that is, to make Him a Perfect God*; *onely it ſaith the Father hath this peculiar ὑπεροχὴ or Priviledge, that He is Firſt in order of Nature. He hath no Eſſential or Real Perfection more than the other Two Perſons*; *onely He hath this Honour, that their Original is from Him.* And hence you Conclude, *that it is not poſſible to ſay what are Three* GODS, *if this be not an Account and Deſcription of Three Gods.*

But, Sir, doth our Author's *Hypotheſis* give the FATHER no other Priviledge above the Son and H. Spirit, than his being *Firſt in Order of Nature*, and their *Original?* Doth not the *Fourth Propoſition* expreſly ſay that he is *Self-Exiſtent* too? And His being their *Original*, is ſo far from being the ſame thing with *Self*-Exiſtence, that ſimply in it ſelf conſidered, it doth not ſo much as neceſſarily *ſuppoſe* His *Self*-Exiſtence. Doth he who ſaith, that the *Sun* is the Original of the Illuſtrious *Splendour* in the Heavens, and of the *Light* which pervades the World, in ſo ſaying affirm that it is *Self*-Exiſtent? And I ſhall wonder, if *Self-Exiſtence* be but an *Imaginary* Perfection, I ſhould rather Conclude it the very greateſt of all *Real* Perfections. How then can you ſay, That *this Hypotheſis gives the Father no other Priviledge above the other Perſons, but onely that He is Firſt in Order of Nature?*

Again, Is not *Abſolute Independence* a Real Perfection, and *Being the Firſt Original of all things* another? But doth not the *Sixth Propoſition* conſi-

dered

dered with the *Fifth*, aſcribe *both theſe* too to the *Father* onely?

And whereas you ſay farther, That *this Hypotheſis gives the Second and Third Perſons all the Attributes that are neceſſary to Eſſentiate a God*, What Earnings will you make of *this?* ſince it ſaith not that thoſe which are aſcribed to *them* (*viz.* infinite *Goodneſs*, *Wiſdom* and *Power*,) are all that are neceſſary to Eſſentiate a God in the *Abſolutely Higheſt Sence*, which the Name of *God* is ever to be underſtood in in Holy Scripture.

And now you can need no Anſwer to what you ſay in the laſt Words of this Paragraph, *viz. The Perfections of the Deity that are Real, are Gods infinite* Wiſdom, Power, Goodneſs, Duration, *and ſuch like: Therefore the* Son *and* Spirit *are Gods in the Higheſt Sence of that Word, if they have all thoſe aforeſaid real and poſitive Perfections of the Divine Nature; tho' it be granted at the ſame time, that they are Originated from the Father.* You need, I ſay, no Anſwer hereto, ſince you were now minded, that *Self-Exiſtence, Abſolute Independence, and Being the Firſt Original of All things*, are Perfections peculiar to God the Father; and that this is part of the *Explication*. And upon this Account *Athanaſius*, S. *Baſil*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and St. *Chryſoſtom*, with ſeveral of the *Latin* Fathers, interpret thoſe Words of our B. Saviour, *My Father is greater than I*, to have been ſpoken, not of His *Humanity*, but His *Divinity*; as Dr. *Cudworth* hath ſhewed in his 599*th*. Page of his *Intellectual Syſtem of the Univerſe*. Nor certainly did our Lord ever ſay ſo little a thing, as that the *Infinite MAJESTY*

of

of Heaven and Earth is greater than any *Mortal Man.*

And having this Occaſion to Mention Dr. *Cudworth*,, the Honour I have for the Memory of that Excellent Perſon, conſtraineth me to ſay, That the Account he gives of the Fathers Judgment of the *Trinity*, is not Repreſented as it ought to have been, in the former *Socinian* Treatiſe of *Conſiderations on the Explications thereof.* And I *ſo* word that moſt Learned Performance of the Doctor, becauſe he was therein an *Hiſtorian*, rather than an *Explicator.*

Your next Paragraph begins with this Queſtion, *A Father begets Two Sons that have all the Properties of the Humane Nature, in as great Perfection as their Father; ſhall we deny that they are Men in the Higheſt Sence of that Word, becauſe they are Originated from their Father? And this*, ſay you, *is the very Caſe before us.* But, Sir, this is not (with your Leave) the very Caſe before us: 'Tis nothing *like* it, becauſe 'tis the Perfection of no *Man*, to be *Self*-Exiſtent; nor are a Humane Fathers Sons immediately dependent on him for the Continuation of their Being, as the Two *Perſons* are upon *God the Father*, as *Light* is upon the *Sun*, and as *Streams* on the *Fountain.* But if a Humane Father could be ſuppoſed to be Self-Exiſtent, and that his Sons had the now mentioned kind of Dependence upon him, the Conſequence muſt be, that *their* Nature is ſhort of the Perfection of their *Fathers* Nature, notwithſtanding the many Properties they *agree* in; and therefore that they are not Men in ſo high a Sence, as *he* is a Man; ſeeing the Humane Nature would be ſuppoſed capable of Perfections which they have

not,

not, but their Father *hath*. What follows of this Paragraph, is only applying the Point in Controverſie to this Caſe; but I have ſaid enough to ſhew that there is not the leaſt Affinity between theſe Two Caſes.

The Subſtance of what you farther Object againſt this *Explication*, is a Remark upon the *Twenty Second Propoſition*: And you ſay, *In theſe few Words conſiſt the ſtrength and Hopes of this Explication. The unconceivably Cloſe Union in Will and Nature between the Three Gods, makes them to be One God.* I ſee, Sir, you as odiouſly word it as you can, but you would have loſt nothing by it, had you kept to our *Author*'s Words, and ſaid *Three Perſons*; or, if you had pleaſed, *Three diſtinct Proper Perſons*, inſtead of *Three Gods*.

Well, Sir, the unconceivably Cloſe Union in Will and Nature between the Divine Perſons *is* that (as you ſay) *in which the ſtrength and hopes of this Explication do conſiſt*. But you Object, That this is as much as to ſay, that *they are One God by that very thing, which moſt inconteſtably declares them to be Three Gods*. And this you make out by this *Queſtion, what is the Union of Will and Nature between diſtinct intellectual Beings, and different Subſtances; is it any other but this, in plain Engliſh, that they always will the ſame things, and their Natures and Subſtances are united in the ſame Properties, Attributes, or Perfections? That is to ſay*, as you proceed, *theſe Three intellectual Subſtances or Beings, are each of them Almighty, Omniſcient, moſt Good, and the reſt; why this is the very thing that makes them to be Three Gods*. Next, you give us a Proof of this, but you might have ſaved your

ſelf that labour; for 'tis readily granted, if this be *all* the Union that is between them. But in Anſwer to your Queſtion, it muſt never be granted you that the inſeparably Cloſe Union between the Three Divine Perſons, both in Will and Nature, is *no more* than their Union in the ſame *will* and *Properties*; for it is alſo their immediate Union in their *Subſtances*, (their Spiritual Subſtances) as the Union between our *Souls* and *Bodies* is in their *Subſtances*. And if they were acknowledged to be *ſeparate* Subſtances, and United onely as you ſay, you would have made our Author aſhamed of his *Explication*. But if, Sir, you think you may do it *however*, by ſaying that the Subſtance and Properties of the Divine Nature are the *ſelf-ſame* thing; I will now content my ſelf to ſay onely *this*, then you might have uſed the Word *Subſtances*, as well as *Properties* and *Attributes*; and then it would have appeared at firſt ſight, that there is no force in your Objection. But your ſelf doth alſo expreſly here diſtinguiſh them, in ſaying, that *their Subſtances are united in the ſame Properties, Attributes or Perfections.*

If you ask me what Account can be given to the ſatisfaction of any Rational Perſon, of ſuch an Union between the Subſtances of the Three Perſons, I will Reply that when you give *me* an intelligible Account of the Union betwixt our *Souls* and *Bodies*, I do promiſe to give *you* a no leſs intelligible Account of the Union betwixt the Subſtances of the *Three Divine Perſons*. Nay (as the *Twenty Second Propoſition* tells you) the Union between our *Souls* and *Bodies* is *more* unaccountable to Reaſon, than is *this* Union;

be-

becauſe *that* is an Union between Subſtances of Perfectly *unlike*, and even *contrary* Natures. In reciting that Propoſition, you ſay *Contradictory* inſtead of *Contrary*; but I ſuppoſe this was the fault, not of your *Pen*, but of the *Preſs*.

But if you will ſay, that the Subſtances of our *Souls* and *Bodies* are onely united in their *Properties*; I ſay they are not *at all* united in *theſe*, becauſe their Properties are of as different and contrary a Nature, as their *Subſtances*. But if they could be united in *theſe*, yet the Union of their Subſtances muſt be *more* than their being united in their *Properties*, except *my Soul* is as much united with *your Body* as with *mine own*; for the Eſſential Properties of all Souls and Bodies are the ſame.

And now, Sir, I hope you are ſenſible, that you might have ſpared your *Laſt* Paragraph, *viz. How is it poſſible that this Author ſhould overlook ſuch an Obvious Reaſoning, or not be Satisfied with it?* And ſay I, How is it poſſible that ſo Acute a Perſon as your Writings ſpeak you to be, ſhould be guilty of ſo plain a **Flaw** in that Reaſoning, and take it to be ſo **Obvious**? I ſhall give you no farther trouble, than while I deſire you to take notice, That I have not troubled you with more words than needs muſt; and much leſs with *Fineſſes*, to uſe your Own Word; nor with any Subtle Diſtinctions, as much Enamoured, as you perceive I am, with the *School-men*; nor with any thing you may be tempted to call *Scholaſtical Cant*, or *Metaphyſical Gibberiſh*; nor ſo much as with the Father's great word περιχωρεσις. But my Anſwer is as plain as a *Pyke ſtaff*, yet as *full* as plain, to all

the Reflections you have made upon the *Explication*. But whether it be to the *purpose* too, I must leave it to the Judgment of the fair and impartial Reader. But I can sincerely avow, That I have said nothing to any of your Objections, merely because for my Credits sake, (seeing I undertook to Reply to them) I must say *Something*: Nor hath a *Line* come from me which is not agreeable to the sense of my Mind; nor which I *think not* to be *pertinent*. As I also solemnly Profess, that since such Perfections and Operations, as are unquestionably *Proper* to the Deity, are attributed in H. Scripture to the *Son* and *H. Spirit*; and that I cannot be Satisfied by the extremely laboured Glosses and Criticisms of the *Socinians*, to depart from the most Obvious and Natural Sence of the Multitude of Texts wherein they are so; as doubting whether many Texts are to be found, which might not have more than one sence put upon them, by the same Labour and Art: And since Divine Honour is most Expressly declared to be due to the *Son*, *John* 5. 23. and He hath the Honour of such a Doxology, *Apocal.* 1. 6. as according to the Original, as well as our Translation, I remember not an Higher given to *God the Father* in all the New-Testament. And since too the Son and Spirit are all along most plainly described, as *distinct Persons* both from the **Father**, and from **One Another**, even as plainly as Words can do it; and yet all this while the *Unity* of the Deity is fully Asserted; I can not, for my life, Reconcile these things but by this *Ancient Explication* of the Trinity, which your self ingenuously acknowledges to be a *Possible Scheme*; and *Hereby*, I thank GOD,

GOD, I can do it to my great Satisfaction.

That God Almighty would give us a Right Understanding in all the Points of our Christian Faith, and particularly in the **Great and Weighty One**, wherein you Differ from the Generality of Christians in all Ages; and that we may be sincere and unbyassed, and also Humble, in our Searches after Truth; not *leaning* over confidently *to our own Understandings*, since those that most improve them are most sensible of their being infinitely too shallow to comprehend Truths of *this* Nature especially, is the Humble and most Hearty Prayer of,

SIR,

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